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FROM AMBASSADOR WHITNEY TO THE SECRETARY

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR SECRETARY RICE'S APRIL 25-26 VISIT  
TO OSLO

1.(SBU) SUMMARY: Norway is increasingly active and independent on issues from the Middle East to Russia, alternatively complementing or at cross purposes with US policy. Your visit is a chance to highlight the strength of our bilateral relations and international cooperation, but also to challenge Norway to be more supportive on priority issues, including Iraq, Russia, Iran and the Middle East. END SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION: INCREASING ACTIVISM IN FOREIGN POLICY

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2.(SBU) Our relationship with Norway continues to be strong but is evolving as Norway pursues increasingly independent policies. While recognizing the importance of U.S.-Norwegian bilateral relations, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg's government has taken some steps directly opposing U.S. preferences. Under the energetic and idealistic leadership of Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere, Norway has been extremely active in foreign policy, pursuing both traditional Norwegian goals such as support for NATO and the UN and newer goals such as fostering dialogue in the Middle East and deepening Norway's commitment to Africa. At times Stoere's bedrock belief in the importance of dialogue has led to policies that have gone beyond the consensus of the international community. Recent examples of this activism include the decision to normalize relations with the Palestinian Unity Government and continuing and deepening dialogue with Iran and Cuba, and launching an initiative to ban cluster munitions.

3.(SBU) Despite these actions, the government and Norwegians in general find it important to believe that Stoere's idealistic foreign policy initiatives are (at least implicitly) accepted by the United States. Stoere believes that Norway has special USG support to act independently and that by doing so it plays a useful role. On issues where that is not the case, it is important to immediately clarify our position before Norway goes further. For example, Deputy Foreign Minister Raymond Johansen, fresh from his visit to Cuba during which he did not meet with the opposition, is planning a May trip to Iran. There are also plans for the Iranian Foreign Minister to visit Oslo. Without clear statements from you on U.S. red lines, Stoere will feel free to continue his policies.

#### THE GON--A FRAGILE COALITION

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4.(SBU) Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg likes to portray himself as a youthful and energetic leader. This is his second stint as Prime Minister. His first short term ended in a disastrous defeat for the Labor party in 2001. In coming to office again, he was committed not to run a minority government and fought to build a coalition with the

far left Socialist Left (SV) and the Center parties. The Socialist Left party (SV) generally opposes U.S. policies and opposes Norway's membership in NATO, although as part of the government they temporarily set this aside. Stoltenberg has moderated his SV partners' behavior when necessary but must spend a lot of energy keeping the left happy while attempting to maintain Norway's historic support for NATO and the United States.

5.(SBU) A prime example of this tension was the government's October 2006 decision to refuse a NATO request for special forces to be sent to Afghanistan. Coming after a painful environmental debate that SV lost, the government decided it would not risk the coalition over the NATO request at that time. Nonetheless, the government is aware of the large popular reserve of support for continuing Norway's traditional emphasis on NATO. This was reflected by the government's ultimate February 2007 decision to send special forces to Kabul after a new NATO request.

#### KEEPING NORWAY A STRONG, PROACTIVE ALLY AND FRIEND

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6.(SBU) The Embassy's priority is to keep Norway a valuable U.S. ally which works cooperatively with us to combat terror, instability, and poverty throughout the world. Norway's small size, non-threatening reputation, wealth, and diplomatic activism give it a large international role, increasing the importance of our relationship. We share interests in conflict resolution in the Middle East, Balkans, Sudan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Colombia, and Haiti, but our approaches sometimes differ. We also share an emphasis on UN reform, fighting corruption while promoting development, battling diseases, combating climate change, and developing new energy resources in the Barents Sea and the Arctic (dubbed the High North by Norway).

7.(SBU) Historic links from large-scale Norwegian emigration to the United States and security ties during World War II and the Cold War remain, but are diminishing. Norway looks increasingly to Europe, seeking close links to the EU, but not membership. Fewer Norwegians study in the United States and suspicion of American foreign policy motives and values is high. Few Norwegians appreciate how closely our nations cooperate and how many values we share. Divergence over Iraq and terrorism has magnified differences, with criticism of the United States exaggerated by the media.

8.(SBU) Where the United States and Norway do work together, in for example Sudan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, the relationship is close, strong and productive. Despite its small size, Norway has been a meaningful partner in international operations. It presently has approximately 700 troops in Afghanistan and stands ready to send UN peacekeepers to Sudan. Norway contributes significant resources to humanitarian assistance and development aid. For example, in 2007 Afghanistan will receive 70-86 million dollars, an increase of 35% over 2006 levels. Norway's current government stresses the need for increased cooperation between military and civilian actors in Afghanistan. MFA's political director, Kai Eide, welcomed your recent emphasis on a "comprehensive" approach in Afghanistan and suggested that it would increase Norwegian and allied sense of ownership of ISAF and NATO if smaller countries such as Norway could be publicly recognized for their initiatives, including the comprehensive approach.

#### MIXED RESULTS WHEN NORWAY STRIKES OUT ON ITS OWN

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9.(SBU) Anxious to be a catalyst for Middle East peace, Norway maintained regular contact with Hamas and was the first government to open political relations and resume assistance to the Palestinian National Unity Government. Norway also independently reached out to Syria and Iran. The relationship with Iran is based on a long-running political dialogue and energy ties.

10.(SBU) Norway's relations with Russia, especially on

energy, are a major focus. A legal dispute over the Svalbard archipelago involves Russia and a large area in the Barents Sea is claimed by both Norway and Russia. Norway values its close relations with Russia and has been unwilling to ever criticize Russia publicly, although the Ministry of Defense has stressed the need for increased GON capacity to protect its interests in the North. Particularly on the missile defense issue, reluctance by government officials to counter Russian mistruths have led to extensive media acceptance of the Russian false narrative.

#### DEFENSE ISSUES

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11.(SBU) Norway and the United States have one of the closest military and intelligence relationships in the world. Hundreds of Norwegians receive U.S. training each year, Norway operates efficiently with U.S. forces within NATO, and U.S. military sales help solidify interoperability. The planned purchase of new fighter aircraft in 2008 is a dominant theme in the defense debate in Norway. Norway is planning to purchase approximately 48 aircraft, either the U.S. Joint Strike Fighter (JSF), the Eurofighter or the Swedish Gripen. Norway recently signed an MOU continuing its participation in the JSF program. Norway also ordered 4 new C-130 transport planes, beginning to restore the lift capacity key to expeditionary forces.

12.(SBU) The Norwegian MOD continues to be an enthusiastic supporter of NATO transformation. The MOD has aggressively pursued a restructuring of Norway's defense establishment to support this. Flat funding has limited the effectiveness of the MOD's ability to transform the military and it is uncertain to what degree the government supports this transition.

13.(SBU) In February Norway hosted a conference to discuss a legally binding international instrument to ban cluster munitions with unacceptable humanitarian consequences. Norway insists that a total ban is not on the table. Instead, the stated goal is to create restrictions on unreliable cluster munitions, prevent proliferation and help clean up unexploded cluster munitions. We remain concerned that this process will undermine the Convention on Conventional Weapons and may impact allied operations.

#### COUNTER-TERRORISM

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14.(SBU) Terrorists have used Norway to raise funds and perhaps plan operations. In 2006, a plot to attack the U.S. and Israeli Embassies was uncovered; the prosecution now underway is the first test of new counter-terrorism legislation. New surveillance authority was successfully used in this case. Norway has also improved airport security. Nonetheless, most do not see terrorism as a threat to Norway. Counter-terrorism resources are limited and attention to the issue is spotty.

#### AN IMPORTANT ENERGY PARTNER FOR THE U.S. AND THE WORLD

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15.(SBU) Norway is the third largest export of oil and natural gas in the world. Thus, it is a significant energy supplier and its stability, reliability, and low level of corruption help Norway contribute to energy security and set an example to other producers. Norway is looking north for its energy future towards the Barents Sea and the Arctic. The High North region is of crucial importance to the Norwegians. The region is also increasingly important to the United States. In 2007 Norway will begin shipping Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from a Barents Sea field to Cove Point, MD.

16.(SBU) Most of the state's revenues from petroleum activities are allocated to a separate fund, the Government Pension Fund Global. The value of the fund now exceeds USD 300 billion. The GON has ordered divestiture of the Fund's holdings of a number of American companies, including Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Wal-Mart and others, for alleged violation

of ethical guidelines. The Embassy has weighed in on the issue, highlighting the arbitrary nature of the decisions and urging a more transparent process.

YOUR VISIT IS A KEY OPPORTUNITY

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¶17. (SBU) As old ties binding Norway to the U.S. fray, we must reinvigorate the relationship. Commonalities with our own transformational agenda are the place to start. Our robust Public Diplomacy strategy emphasizes shared values and counters negative narratives. An additional element in our strategy is the Mission's educational exchange initiative, which your letter helped launch. We expect that by creating new partnerships, lowering financial and other barriers, and increasing information for students, we will see a dramatic increase in the number of students going to the U.S. to help maintain people-to-people ties.

¶18. (SBU) Aside from pressing your points in bilateral meetings, your engagement with the local media will be a critical opportunity to voice America's positions to the general Norwegian public. In addition to the press opportunity with the Foreign Minister, I hope you will consider doing an interview on the state television to highlight the long-standing relationship with Norway and the many areas where we work together. Such an interview would significantly advance our cause in Norway.

JOHNSON